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Medals Goran Simic

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Goran Simic

MEDALS

When he returned from the war my grandfather locked himself up in the attic and did not come out for fifteen days. During the day he was silent and at night he would moan so terribly that the candles under the icon would go out. My grandmother saw the faces of death when he finally came down.

When my father returned from the war in his bloodstained overcoat, he spilled a heap of medals from his bag and went up to the attic without looking at anyone. During the day we would compare his medals with grandfather's, and at night we would put our heads under the pillows so as not to hear him calling his dead friends and moaning. Come morning, my mother would place his shiny medals on the window for passers-by to see. But no one passed by our house anymore because no one could stand the moaning. One morning we found a ghost in the overcoat by the bed. The ghost watching with his own eyes.

It happened a long time ago. The family vault has thickened. The medals still hang on the walls, and sometimes the clerks take them during the holidays and return them after a couple of days. I would not even notice if they never returned them. Only sometimes, after I'm horrified by the news of the war, I see them on the wall. Because the only thing left from my father and grandfather are the screams and moans, and I console myself that it is the wind scratching the damaged attic beams of our simple house.

Translated from the Bosnian
by **Amela Simic** and **Christopher Merrill**